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CT General Assembly Public Hearing, Housing Committee / 830-g

Re: Proposed HB No 6128

Good Evening State Legislators, thank you for your time and service to Connecticut .

My name is Laurene O'Brien, from Fairfield CT, I hold elected office and serve as a member of our Representative Town Meeting (RTM), serve on the RTM Public Health & Safety committee and a member of FairPLAN.

Your leadership and legislative decisions to safeguard responsible development in Fairfield are critical and will impact our town for many years to come. Applications for apartment buildings that are larger and denser that suddenly proliferating and need Town review and consideration exponentially, not expeditiously. Developers are coming to Fairfield interested in helping us with affordable housing, a multi-faceted challenge that places public health and safety paramount.

The right project, in the right location is critical to the project's success and the long term appeal of our community. Most 830-g applications I have seen in Fairfield create unsafe conditions for apartment residents and the Fairfield community at large. Builders fail to acknowledge, at least publically potential problems placing multiple high density housing by leveraging 830-g in compact, complex, flood prone neighborhoods, with a history of severe parking problems.

My constituents and neighbors are extremely worried about public safety and the negative effects the proposed 830-g apartment building would have on their neighborhood.

Residents are concerned because one area in town is a **compact, complex, flood prone neighborhood, with a history of severe parking problems is being targeted for not one but two high density 830-g projects.**

I personally am **exceedingly concerned for NOT only the residents** of these type of neighborhoods, but for **all first responders; including EMS and Fairfield fire and police personnel.** We expect these first responders to be responsible for and respond to emergencies & disasters town wide, putting their lives on the line for the safety of all the residents in the town of Fairfield.

The increasing demand by builders and developers leading the charge for the introduction of high density housing to the town of Fairfield creates a critical concern for public safety for all town residents, especially those that reside in and around the 'No Outlet' Berwick & Fairchild Avenues, because prior to construction these residents had yet to feel the unknown impact of the still-under-construction 54-unit building at the end of Fairchild Avenue.

The burden of proof and expense is inappropriately shifted to consumers in residential neighborhoods, from for profit builders who want to expand their business. Forcing these residents to pay legal fees and navigate the legal and zoning landscape at a unfair personal expense.

It would be speculative, for any of us, to project potential renters for any project. But I think we can all agree young people, recent high school and college graduates, persons with special needs, persons with disabilities, hardworking families that income qualify, senior citizens; downsizing or low income, can all be candidates for this type of high density building.

For all of the later groups, as a town we want housing stock that offers safe and good quality of life, proximity to town services and amenities, in addition to the opportunity for maximum integration into our community. None of these are provided at this proposed project located between Metro North railroad tracks and I95.

As Fairfield baby boomers age, the demand for appropriate senior housing will increase to meet the needs of a changing population, exemplifying the need for not only ample number of handicap units, and handicap parking spaces, but elevators in all multiple story buildings. Where does it leave us, if we are cutting back zoning requirements to an absolute minimum? Then as our town grows and changes, how will we adjust to meet the populations needs?

I understand the need for more high density housing in Fairfield, but not at the expense of public health and safety. I urge you to consider the myriad of safety issues associated with the proposed apartment building project at 92-140 Bronson Rd and deny the application.

Concerning are predatory builders appearing only to consider ROI. For example a recent Bronson Road application in Fairfield CT poses a significant safety concern for residents of the building and others in the community:

1. **Dangerous location** - at the entrance ramp for I-95.
2. **Pedestrians are at risk - due to Lack of sidewalks and crosswalks.**  
Seniors, Young professionals – Children
3. **Inadequate Parking and "spillover" parking spaces are unsafe.**  
Proper vs. adequate amount parking > all needed parking must safely be provided on site.

4. **Insufficient Handicapped Parking Only 2 handicapped spaces per building**  
What happens when a resident, or several, newly qualifies for handicap privileges?
5. **Driveway width too narrow-** far narrower than our engineering staff believes is generally necessary for safe and effective access to the building.
6. **Questionable safety of the Topology of driveway, particularly in winter.**  
Creating a dangerous condition particularly, in winter, on an already too-narrow, active driveway with pedestrians.
7. **Parking lot egress is dangerously narrow and poorly designed**  
Safety considerations - secondary concern. Project packed with max. parking spaces as possible into the allotted area, with too few handicapped spaces.

Please bear in mind, what makes a house a home is the quality of life and the people you share that life with. What makes a street a neighborhood, is the same thing, the quality of life and the people you share that life with.

Please do not ruin neighborhoods by taking away residents quality of life, and creating unsafe environments for not only residents but our first responders. Especially not for a law of unintended consequences that so far has hurt the very people it's intended to help in Fairfield.

Thank you for considering these and the other issues raised by the community about the safety of 830g applications for apartment buildings.

<http://www.danbury-ct.gov/filestorage/21015/21087/21123/23014/Page8-1112.pdf>